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*Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity: being Studies in Religious History from 330 B. C. to 330 A. D.* By F. LEGGE, F.S.A. In two volumes. (Cambridge: University Press. 1915. Pp. xlviii, 202; ix, 425.)

MR. LEGGE begins with Alexander as a forerunner of Christianity, since the marriage of Europe and Asia and the fusion of religions initiated by Alexander's conquests opened the era of general religious associations made up of individuals without regard to nationality or social rank, with rituals rehearsing the passion, death, and resurrection of a god. In particular Mr. Legge gives a most interesting account of the Alexandrian fusion of Greek and Egyptian cults which was fostered by Ptolemy. The bulk of the work is devoted to the study of Gnosticism, Mithraism, and Manichaeism. The transition from paganism to the Gnosticism which attached itself to the Christian movement is here shown to begin with the teaching of Orphic circles, and it is by this construction of the process of religious development that Mr. Legge's book distinguishes itself, making intelligible the ideas and practices which pagans brought as the content of their lives to the portals of Christianity.

As for the cults considered, no writer in English has given us a treatment equal to this in erudition, and many things known only to the few are here brought to more general knowledge, as, for example, what has been learned about Manichaeism by recent discoveries of remains in Asia. Throughout the two volumes Mr. Legge enters with great zest into the details of speculations bewildering and fantastic, and it is probable that specialists will profit by this copious and minute discussion. For a quarter of a century articles in learned journals have evidenced the author's industry, and he prefaces this work with a list of something like five hundred titles of books and articles referred to in the text. The somewhat miscellaneous character of the list makes one regret that he did not give instead a critical bibliography of more modest dimensions. It is a surprise to discover that a scholar of such learning has not used the works of Reitzenstein or Rohde's *Psyche*, and the absence of Conybeare's *Key of Truth* is to be deplored since it would have made impossible the references to the Paulicians as Manichaeans (II. 321, 357).

The appearance of this formidable work is an event of importance at a time when there is increasing interest in the relation of Christian forms of belief and ritual practice to those of pagan cults. Mr. Legge considers that the channel of pagan influence on Christianity was the Gnostic movement—a stage for many in the transition from paganism. With regard to the difficult topic of Gnosticism we may waive what might be at issue between Legge's account and Faye's *Gnostiques et Gnosticisme* (listed but apparently not appropriated), but in general it may be said that Mr. Legge obscures the ethical advance of Christian Gnosticism like the Valentinian, though there is mention of this (II.

87). He has so immersed himself in the details of mythological symbolism that he fails to make evident the practical value for conduct and the psychological religious satisfactions which more than any continuity with the contents of pagan imagination would explain the success of such schools as Valentine's.

Indeed, after his admirable constructive beginning Mr. Legge fails to maintain the impression of constructive insight, and the defect seems to be due to the fact that he is more familiar with the by-ways and hedges than with the main road. He is, to be sure, not dealing with the Christian Church, but it is singular to observe how often this scholar, intimate with the details of obscure sects, should be inexpert in his references to the main current of the Christian historical process. These references are often blemishes in his work. It is amazing to read that in the gospel text "wise as serpents and harmless as doves" we have a reference to the dove and serpent as emblems associated with the Asiatic goddess worshipped under the name of Astarte or Aphrodite (II. 135), and that Paul's success in Asia Minor is due to the eagerness of converts to find a *via media* "which enabled them to reconcile the Jewish tradition, long familiar to them through spells and charms, with the legends of the Greek mysteries" (II. 85). What Paul taught is instanced by references to Döllinger and Hatch, while Neander and Duchesne release Mr. Legge from an independent control of matters of church history. Misled by an error in the English version of Harnack's *Expansion of Christianity*, he dates the fourth-century Apostolic Constitutions in the second century (II. 7). He thinks that Theodotus was a Gnostic (II. 9), that primitive bishops were "intellectual men of the world" (II. 8), and from First Clement, c. 44, leaps to the conclusion that "envy of the Episcopate was the principal sin against which the Christian writers of the sub-Apostolic age warned their readers" (II. 8). With wild exaggeration he says that the effect of the Nicene controversies was "to deluge the world with blood" (II. 23). He dates the appearance of the Fourth Gospel about 165 A. D. and the writings of Irenaeus in the third century. He thinks the passionate philanthropy of the first Christians (having all things in common) was an indifference to wealth in view of the speedy Advent (I. 162), and that a later medieval hostility to riches is due to a Manichaean text. From this Manichaean text, also, Calvin got his doctrine of eternal damnation (II. 309), and a Marcionite anticipated Luther by teaching that "those who trust in the crucified will be saved, *if only they do good works*" (II. 219)!

These illustrations are symptoms of an insecurity of understanding which impairs the value of a work of great importance.

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